

Chairwomen Osten and Walker, Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Rita Weisskoff and I'm a resident of Fairfield.

I am testifying today in opposition to Governor Lamont's proposed budget (H.B. 6659) because I am very concerned the lack of K-12 education funding the proposed budget includes has the potential to be detrimental to the economic success of Connecticut.

I am worried about the future of Connecticut's workforce. Eighty-seven percent of our state's manufacturers say they are struggling to recruit and retain employees. Nearly 115,000 job positions are currently unfilled — largely due to a lack of skilled applicants.

This means that not all of Connecticut's students are graduating with the skills necessary to be successful in today's workforce and help grow our state's economy. If we don't prioritize funding our students, we won't be able to develop a talent pipeline that creates career pathways for our own students. It will be impossible for Connecticut to improve and maintain our workforce, not only now but for many years to come.

Research has repeatedly shown that investing in education funding results in higher student achievement, higher lifetime earnings, and a more skilled workforce. All three are critical to improving the economic state of Connecticut and also improving the quality of life for our residents and communities.

We must do everything in our power to ensure this trend is reversed and that our students have access to every opportunity and equitable funding — regardless of where they live, the type of school they attend, and their individualized learning needs.

I am urging you to reject the governor's proposed budget and instead prioritize passing H.B. 5003, which would fully and equitably fund ALL of our public school students and give them the best chance to succeed both academically and in their future careers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rita Weisskoff
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